

Communication services for deaf and hard of hearing people



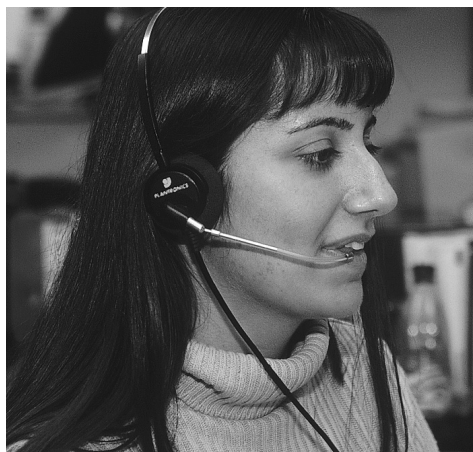
About this leaflet

This leaflet is written for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people who want to find out about communication services. Hearing people who need to book a service may also find this leaflet useful. We use the term deaf people to refer to deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people throughout this leaflet. We also tell you about communication services for deafblind people – deafblind interpreters and communicator guides.

This leaflet covers:

- BSL/English interpreters, including video interpreting services. (BSL means British Sign Language.)
- Communication support workers.
- Deafblind interpreters and communicator guides.
- Lipspeakers.
- Notetakers.
- Electronic notetakers.
- Speech-to-text reporters.

Contact the RNID Information Line for more information about communication services



Choosing a service

You can choose a communication service that suits you and your needs. If you're not sure, ask for advice when making a booking, or contact the RNID Information Line (see the back cover for details). We have factsheets on all the services described in this leaflet.

Booking a service

To find out how to book a communication service, contact the RNID Information Line. Services are in great demand across the UK, so it's best to book at least four to six weeks in advance. But it is always worth trying at the last minute if you need to. Video interpreting is designed to be available at very short notice.

When you book, it's important to give information about the assignment, including dates, times and the full address of the venue. It also helps if you can supply some background information – is it a meeting, an interview or a conference, how many people are involved, how long will it last?

You usually need to book a communication service for at least two hours. Most start from around £90 for a minimum booking but speech-to-text reporting is more expensive. Video interpreting costs less, but it's only appropriate for short periods of time. However, prices for communication services do vary, so check before making a booking.

What about confidentiality?

People who provide communication services follow strict guidelines. This means their work is absolutely confidential and they should not tell anyone else what is said in an assignment. They are also impartial, which means they are not allowed to offer opinions while working. All BSL/English interpreters used by RNID are registered with CACDP (the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People) and adhere to its code of ethics.

Help with paying for communication services

If you are deaf or deafblind you won't usually have to pay for the communication services you need. Find out more about the following:

- The Government's Access to Work scheme may help to pay for communication services you need at work or, if you are unemployed, for interviews.
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) may require service providers, such as hospitals and doctors, to provide communication services.
- If you are a student you may be able to get help to pay for communication services, or your education provider may have to provide them under the DDA.
- You might be able to claim a benefit called Disability Living Allowance, if you need help to communicate with others.

BSL/English interpreters

Deaf people whose first or preferred language is BSL use BSL/English interpreters. A BSL/English interpreter can make it easier for a deaf sign language user and a hearing person to communicate with each other. An interpreter interprets from one language to the other. In the UK, this will usually be from BSL to spoken or written English, or vice-versa.

Make sure you book an interpreter who has completed approved interpreter training and who is registered with either CACDP or SASLI (Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters). Your interpreters will need a break roughly every 30 minutes. For longer assignments you should book two interpreters.



BSL/English interpreters work with people whose first or preferred language is BSL

Video interpreting

Although most interpreting is done face-to-face, several organisations, including RNID, now offer a video interpreting service. Video interpreting is not a replacement for face-to-face interpreting. But it has been set up to try and solve the problem of getting an interpreter at short notice or for brief appointments. Anyone with access to a videophone and ISDN2 line can book a video interpreter.

Communication support workers

Communication support workers support deaf people, usually in an educational setting. They provide help with communication between you, your tutor and other students on your course. The support they offer depends on your needs. They will use clear communication and may take notes, interpret, or communicate in BSL or Sign Supported English (SSE), depending on their skills.

Their rate of pay varies a lot and depends on what support they offer.

Deafblind interpreters and communicator guides

Deafblind people and hearing or sighted people use deafblind interpreters or communicator guides to communicate with each other.

Interpreters and communicator guides work with a range of communication methods including BSL, hands-on-signing, clear communication, the Block Alphabet, the Deafblind Manual Alphabet and speech-to-braille.

- Deafblind interpreters work in more formal settings, such as on training courses.
- Communicator guides work more informally. For example, they could help you write a letter, or they may go out with you to help with an everyday activity like shopping.

Lipspeakers

Lipspeakers work with people who prefer to communicate through lipreading and speech. You should be a confident lipreader with good English skills to use one. Both deaf and hearing people can use lipspeakers to help them communicate with each other.

Lipspeakers repeat what is said without using their voice, so that you can lipread them easily. They produce the shape of words clearly, with the flow, rhythm and phrasing of speech. They use natural gestures and facial expressions to help you follow what is being said. They will also use fingerspelling if you ask them to.

Lipspeakers are qualified at two levels, level 2 and level 3, and you should book one who is at the right level for the assignment. Level 2 lipspeakers are not trained to work in large conferences or in workplace assignments where the speed of speech is very fast. Level 3 lipspeakers edit down fast speech, without losing the meaning of what is said. Your lipspeaker will need a break about every 30 minutes. For assignments that are more than two hours long, you should book two lipspeakers. Ask for advice when making a booking.



Lipspeakers work with people who prefer to communicate through lipreading and speech

Notetakers

A notetaker works with deaf people who are comfortable reading English. Notetakers are trained to take notes for deaf people in meetings, on courses, or at other events. Notetakers can be flexible and will write notes in a way that suits you. If they are handwriting notes, it may take you a bit of time to get used to their handwriting.

It is quite common for someone to have a notetaker as well as another communication service. If you are watching a sign language interpreter or lipspeaker, it is impossible to take notes and follow what is being said at the same time.

Notetakers may specialise in a particular field. For example, if you are taking a science degree at university, it's important that your notetaker knows something about the subject. If you have very specific needs, you may need to spend time finding the right notetaker to support you.

Your notetaker will need regular breaks. You should not expect them to work through lunch and coffee breaks, unless this is necessary and part of the course, in which case you may need to book two notetakers.

Electronic notetakers

Electronic notetakers work with deaf people who are comfortable reading English, as all notes are typed in English. They can also help hearing people who want to communicate with deaf people.

Electronic notetakers type a summary of what is being said, on a computer. This information then appears on the screen, so you can read it. Electronic notetaking means you have fewer words to read compared to speech-to-text reporting but it does mean you won't get a full word-for-word report. If you would rather have a word-for-word transcript of everything that is said, you may prefer to use a speech-to-text reporter.

Electronic notetakers use special software, like RNID SpeedText® or Stereotype. They use two laptop computers – one for you and one for the operator. You can read a summary of what has been said on your screen. You can also type a reply, which the operator can read to hearing people in the room.

Your electronic notetaker will need a break about every 30 minutes. You should book two for assignments that are two hours or longer.



Electronic notetakers work with deaf people who are comfortable reading English

Speech-to-text reporters

Speech-to-text reporting is suitable for deaf people who are comfortable reading English, often at high speed and sometimes for up to a couple of hours at a time. Speech-to-text reporters also use systems called Palantype® or Stenograph®.

A speech-to-text reporter uses a special keyboard to type every word that is spoken by a speaker. They type words phonetically – how they sound rather than how they're spelt. This is then converted back into English. Everything that is typed appears on a computer screen. By typing in this way, the reporter can keep up with the speed of spoken English. The resulting English is usually spelt at least 95% correctly and the remaining words are spelt roughly how they sound.

At large events, information can be projected on to a big screen or on to smaller screens around the room. This makes it easier to view.

Normally, you will only need one speech-to-text reporter. However, you should discuss this when you make a booking. If only one is booked, you should make arrangements for regular breaks.

RNID's vision is of a world where deafness and hearing loss are not barriers to opportunity and fulfilment.

RNID is the largest charity representing the 9 million deaf and hard of hearing people in the UK. As a membership charity, we aim to achieve a radically better quality of life for deaf and hard of hearing people. We do this by campaigning and lobbying vigorously, by raising awareness of deafness and hearing loss, by providing services and through social, medical and technical research.

This leaflet is part of RNID's communication range.

Published in February 2004.

Some photographs in this leaflet were posed by models.

RNID Information Line

Contact us for a range of information on deafness and hearing loss.
RNID Information Line, 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL
Telephone 0808 808 0123 Textphone 0808 808 9000
Fax 020 7296 8199 informationline@rnid.org.uk www.rnid.org.uk

RNID Tinnitus Helpline

Contact us for information and advice about tinnitus.
RNID Tinnitus Helpline, 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL
Telephone 0808 808 6666 Textphone 0808 808 0007
Fax 020 7296 8199 tinnitushelpline@rnid.org.uk www.rnid.org.uk

RNID Sound Advantage

We sell a range of equipment for deaf and hard of hearing people.
RNID Sound Advantage, 1 Haddonbrook Business Centre,
Orton Southgate, Peterborough PE2 6YX
Telephone 0870 789 8855 Textphone 01733 238020
Fax 0870 789 8822 solutions@rnid.org.uk www.rnidshop.com

0481/inf417.0204 Registered Charity No. 207720
Photography Elaine Duigenan, Alex Segre, Chris Kelly

